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ready to assist



# Letterneck

13th MEU's Family Gram

May 5, 2000

13th Marine Expeditionary Unit

Vol. 1, No. 2

## Taking care of our own

*13th MEU Marines enhance water survival skills using HEEDs*

by SSgt. Gary L. Zimmerman II

One of the hallmark traits of United States Marines is that they train the way they will fight.

The 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit embodied this trait by participating in water survival training recently at the Aviation Survival Training Center, Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar. Members of the 13th MEU's command element, Battalion Landing Team 3/1 and Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-161 focused their training on emergency egress procedures in the event of an ill-fated helicopter mishap at sea.

The "Fighting 13th" MEU's Marines and Sailors frequently fly in missions over water or cross-deck to and from ships of the USS Tarawa Amphibious Ready Group. According to Capt. William D. Bensch, assistant air officer, 85 percent of the MEU's frequent flyers completed the day-long course that taught emergency egress techniques, water survival during a helicopter crash and use of the Helicopter Emergency Egress Device. The 13th MEU's mission is to achieve 100 percent



SSgt. Gary L. Zimmerman II

Cpl. Greg Kempf, 13th MEU radio operator, tests the HEEDs bottle before practicing emergency egress techniques.

————— please see *HEEDs*, Page 3

## 13th MEU completes first underway exercise

by 1stLt. Jeff Landis

### ABOARD USS TARAWA -

Marines and Sailors of the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit completed their first at-sea period during Composite Training Unit Exercise 00-2, April 10-21, aboard ships of the USS Tarawa Amphibious Ready Group.

Once the ships pulled out of port in San Diego, warriors from the "Fighting 13th" MEU settled into their work spaces and awaited their first warning order for any one of 29 special operations missions. As six AV-8B Harriers from Marine Attack Squadron 214 landed aboard Tarawa on the first day at sea, with the resonating "sounds of freedom," Marines and Sailors of the 13th MEU were reminded of their duties as forward-deployed defenders of the Constitution and the American way of life.

COMPTUEX was 13th MEU's first opportunity during its predeployment cycle to train for joint task force missions and real-world operations from a sea-based platform. The exercise was the fourth major training exercise working toward a special operations capable certification and a deployment to the Western Pacific in mid-August. The underway exercise also gave members of the MEU a chance to adjust to the sudden lifestyle change.

The 13th MEU quickly reacted to its first warning order for a Long-range Helicopter Raid. Marines from K Company, Battalion Landing Team 3/1 boarded helicopters from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 161, the MEU's Aviation Combat Element, to recover an airfield at Marine Corps Logistics Base,

————— please see *COMPTUEX*, Page 3



Sgt. M.C. Miller

*Up, up and away...*

13th MEU helped China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station move two out-of-service F-4 Phantom airplanes into a nearby impact area for bombing targets April 26.

# 13th MEU's non-lethal force tests skills during COMPTUEX

by Sgt. M.C. Miller

An ominous squad of Marines double-timed in formation to the front of the food distribution site, and the rioting crowd suddenly stepped back. A wall of shields stood between the crowd and the Marines. The intimidating Marine Force, clad in shields, facemasks and leg-pads is the Corps' answer to resolving low-intensity conflict.

"React Up!" shouted SSgt. David McColgan, the 13th MEU's non-lethal platoon commander.

The 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit's non-lethal force, A Battery 1/11, Battalion Landing Team 3/1, was employed for the Humanitarian Assistance Operation April 17-19 during the MEU's Composite Training Unit Exercise 00-2.

If the rioters had continued to test the Marines, McColgan could have announced through his bullhorn, "Shotguns tap down!" and four shields would lower with shotguns peering over the top.

The shotguns can fire non-lethal ammunition, such as bean bags, rubber pellets and rubber slugs, which are intended to stop or injure someone instead of kill. The platoon also has four M-203 grenade launchers with non-lethal ammunition at their disposal.

"Even though, as Marines, we are trained to kill," explained Sgt. James Campbell, a 27-year-old squad leader from Peoria, Ill., "sometimes it is better just to keep people from injuring you, especially when you are trying to keep the peace."

"When we go into a friendly area, these tactics allow us to push the rioters back without seriously injuring or killing them."

If it becomes necessary to use lethal force, however, the platoon is prepared. "Just because we are called a "non-lethal" unit, doesn't mean we are not allowed to use lethal force," said Capt. Louis Palazzo, A Battery 1/11 commander and native of Bronx, N. Y. The rules of



Sgt. M.C. Miller

The 13th MEU nonlethal force was called into action after the humanitarian assistance operation turned into a low-intensity conflict during COMPTUEX.

engagement in each situation help determine when lethal force is authorized.

"In artillery, we aren't used to seeing front-line combat, we are usually farther away. Now we are thrust into the thick of it," said Campbell.

"Even though we will probably only be employed in this way during a HAO, any situation can easily turn into combat," said McColgan, a Cape May, N.J. native. "That is one of the reasons we are here, to try to stop a peaceful situation from turning into a hostile one."

## MEU Message Board

### From the commanding officer...

The last two months have been very busy, but productive for the Marines and Sailors of the 13th MEU. We have trained in Arizona, at numerous locations throughout Southern California, and spent several weeks at sea aboard our amphibious ships, the Tarawa, Duluth and Anchorage. The pace of events will continue to quicken over the next 45 days as we approach the final two major events of our predeployment workup, FLEETEX and SOCEX. You should all take great

pride in the many things your spouses have accomplished to date.

I know this hectic schedule places many demands on family life, but there is good news ahead – our predeployment leave block is just around the corner. We will be conducting a unit leave period from close of business July 7 to July 30. During that time each member of the MEU can take two weeks of annual leave. We will have to work the schedules by section, but with our leave dates fixed,

you can begin planning for some much-needed rest before our cruise.

There are two other events I would like to bring to your attention. One is our

Predeployment Brief July 6. We will have all of the many agencies and personnel who support families here at Camp Pendleton available to provide information and answer questions. Second we will be conducting a dependent's cruise the first week of August. It will be a chance for you to come aboard our amphibious ships, go to sea for the day and learn what daily life is like during a deployment. Once we finalize details with our Navy counterparts, we will publish the plan. I hope you can find time to join us for both of these events, as I'm certain they will be very enjoyable.



Col. C.J. Gunther

### SgtMaj's words of wisdom

Let's start off by congratulating SgtMaj. Smith of MSSG-13 on his recent promotion.

Well, here we are. The first underway period is behind us and we are only a few months away from six months of defending democracy.

We are proud to boast professionalism and excellence in our Ground Combat Element, BLT 3/1; Air Combat Element, HMM-161; and Support Element, MSSG-13.



SgtMaj. Senecal talks with boys at the Boys Ranch in Phoenix.

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## MESSAGE

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The Marines and Sailors of the 13th MEU are starting to find out what it is like to be on ship without their loved ones. Even though it is one of the hardest parts of the deployment, it will be over before we know it. Through e-mail, phone calls and the U.S. Postal Service, hopefully we can make this as painless as possible for the family members.

For the unmarried Marines, most of the barracks issues have been rectified, thanks to the Headquarters Commandant section. They will soon be living happy and comfortable in their rooms until they are put on a ship for six months. We will continue to ensure the Marines are getting the best possible living, working, dining and fitness facilities possible.

Most of all, we thank you for your support.

As always, please keep supporting our Key Volunteer Program.

### **S-1 Administration**

The 13th MEU S-1 section has

undergone many arduous preparations for Consolidated Administration during the WESTPAC, 13th MEU's deployment. Sgt. Smith, LCpl. Cohen and LCpl. Garcia are gearing up for the shift of personnel administration to MEF HQ. As the administration reach back team, they stand ready to receive the long ball. The tag team duo of LCpl. Francis and LCpl. Thomas are ready to join USS Tarawa's ships platoon.

Responsible for S-1's duties and accomplishments is Capt. Blankenship, Adjutant, and GySgt. Lamb, administration chief. The gunny will be retiring shortly and will be going back to San Antonio to be a Texas Ranger or one of "America's Most Wanted,"

depending on the path he decides. Cpl. Mendoza will be getting out before next deployment to be a Border Patrol Officer.

New joins to the 13th MEU S-1 are LCpl. Cohen, who joined us from Electronic Warfare Training Group Atlantic in



Sgt. M.C. Miller

### ***What was that sound?***

One of six AV-8B Harriers lands aboard USS Tarawa for COMPTUEX 00-2. The detachment, from Marine Attack Squadron 214, will fulfill vital close air support missions for 13th MEU.

Norfolk, Va., LCpl. Thomas, who joined from 3rd Marine Division in Okinawa, LCpl. Underwood, who is TAD from 1st Marine Division, LCpl. Boyler, who joined from 11th Marines, and finally, LCpl. Marquez, who just arrived from

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## HEEDs

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qualification of all MEU Marines and Sailors identified as frequent flyers.

The training is designed to instill confidence in performing egress procedures and using the HEEDs bottle, according to Aviation Survival Equipmentman (PR) 1st Class David Patrick O'Connor, air warfare/parachute jumper and instructor at ASTC.

"Instructors here take great care to build up confidence in both the specialized gear and the participant's personal belief in the training," he said. A fighting spirit helps people overcome the challenges in surviving a mishap, said PR1 O'Connor. "Man's innate survival mechanism is what the Marines will rely on," explained O'Connor, who survived a helo-borne incident and one crash.

"Being under water is enough to set off natural impulses of escape and survival, but being spun upside down adds to the discomfort. By practicing breathing techniques a person can

minimize the stress factor," explained Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Mark Dutton, an Aircrew Water Survival instructor.

"I felt positive, and nothing took me by surprise," stated Cpl. Greg S. Kempf, 13th MEU radio operator. "Talking to others helped ease any of the difficulties in the training.

"The actual hands-on training is what seems to truly set us above all others as the world's finest fighting force," said Capt. David M. Blankenship, 13th MEU Adjutant. The "Fighting 13th" can conduct a variety of special operation missions. By consistently conducting realistic training, the MEU can accomplish its missions and maintain the highest level of safety.

"This training could be the key to the deployment," said Capt. Blankenship. "Everyone seems comfortable with the HEEDs apparatus and the dunker simulator."

Marines instinctively adapt and overcome adversity, and the recent HEEDs and helo dunker training gave 13th MEU's Marines proactive, realistic instruction that may ultimately save lives. While the 13th MEU is poised on "the tip of the spear," rest assured that it will make every attempt to protect America's greatest asset - its people.

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## COMPTUEX

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Barstow, Calif. The raid force helicopters also got a chance to conduct rapid ground refueling with an on-call KC-130 Hercules.

Soon, warning orders were published at the rapid rate, and 13th MEU conducted simultaneous mission planning for a variety of missions. These missions

included a Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel, a Boat Raid, a Humanitarian Assistance Operation, a Noncombatant Evacuation Operation, a Mass Casualty Drill, a Direct Action mission, and an amphibious assault.

The 13th MEU conducted 11 missions in 10 days.

"We executed an ambitious schedule successfully, and only lost two days to weather," said Capt. Chris Ellinger, 13th MEU's Fire Support Officer and

COMPTUEX action officer. "It was a great training evolution for us and our Navy counterparts to conduct a rapid response planning process and execution."

As Marines and Sailors retrograded from the Tarawa ARG to their homes for a well-deserved Easter break, they brought with them the wisdom of the lessons learned from COMPTUEX to prepare for their next underway exercise, Fleet Exercise 00-2 in May.

# MESSAGE

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admin school.

The "salty dogs" of the section that will be deploying again, Capt.

Blankenship, Cpl. Mayer-Tucker and LCpl. Harrison are busy spinning up the Marines not yet acquainted with the unique rigors of life and administration while at sea.

## S-2 Intelligence

The S-2 is finally at full strength consisting of 1st Radio Battalion from Hawaii; Imagery, Topography, and Human Exploitation Team (HET) of 1st Intelligence Battalion from Camp Pendleton; Weather from MWSS-373 Miramar and MWSS-372 Camp Pendleton; and finally Combat Camera and All Source Analysts "A team" who are proud to be permanent personnel of the 13th MEU.

During our motivating work-ups we've had the pleasure of promoting several of our hard charging Marines and would like to extend to them our congratulations. MSgt. Rawlins, our HET Chief, was promoted to his present rank May 1 and has returned to 1st Intelligence Battalion. SSgt. Montgomery now carries the torch for the HET team. SSgt. "Hard Dog" Zorotrian, our awesome Senior Intelligence Analyst who has proved to be the best in the business, was promoted to his present rank April 1 – well deserved! Sgt. Monzon and Sgt. Benedict our Radio Battalion leathernecks were promoted to their present rank April 1. Cpl. Sikes, our all-knowing, insightful systems guru, was promoted to his present rank January 1. And last but not least Cpl. McKay, our topography genius, was promoted to his present rank meritoriously in February.

Although we're only two exercises away from completing our work-ups, we

decided to add on to a near perfect Production and Analysis Team with two hard charging Marines. Sgt. Scott with HET and SSgt. Drury with Imagery both joined our team in April.

Finally, if it wasn't for our Supreme Leaders of the S-2 section, Maj. Lima, Capt. Jonese (recently selected for Major), and GySgt. "Cut Throat" Jefferson, the S-2 Intelligence section wouldn't be the fully functioning Analysis and Production Cell it is today.

## S-3 Operations/Training

New Joins since our last report:

Capt. Bensch, our new Assistant Air Officer, checked in Dec. 2, 1999 from MAG-11.

SSgt. Gillett checked in as the NBC Chief Dec. 15, 1999 from MTACS at Miramar.

Capt. Ellinger, the Fire Support Officer, checked in to the Command Element Dec. 17, 1999 from the Advanced Field Artillery Captain's Career Course at Ft. Sill, Okla.

PFC Lopez checked in as one of the administration clerks for the S-3 section Dec. 29, 1999.

LCpl. Medina and PFC Sodoski checked in from artillery to support the Force Fires section Jan. 5, 2000.

LCpl. Rosa checked in to the section as an administration clerk augmentee from Transportation Support Battalion Feb. 3, 2000.

Sgt. Manning checked in to the section as the MAGTF Planner SNCO from Division G-3 Feb. 9, 2000.

Cpl. Tyler checked into the section as an assistant MAGTF Planner from FSSG G-3 Feb. 10, 2000.

Capt. Herrera checked into the section as the Force Protection Officer from MTACS-38 Feb. 22, 2000.

Capt. Burns checks into the section as the Tactical Control Center Liaison Officer from MACG-38 Feb. 11, 2000



Sgt. M.C. Miller

## ***That's not the ghostbusters!***

Members of the 13th MEU's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical detection unit recently tested the new Enhanced-NBC system.

1st Lt. Wade checked in to the section as the Message Traffic Information Officer from MACG-38 Feb. 11, 2000. 1st Lt. Wade has also been selected for Captain

Since the beginning of the year the S-3 section has been busy planning several different training exercises. Exercises were conducted in a variety of locations in California and Arizona. The section participated in the Rapid Response Planning Process Staff Planning Course at Electronic Warfare Training Group Pacific, Coronado; MEU Exercise and Interoperability Exercise, both at Camp Pendleton; Training in an Urban Environment at both Phoenix, Ariz. and Point Mugu, Calif. and finally, our first at-sea period aboard the USS Tarawa Amphibious Ready Group during Composite Training Unit Exercise.

COMPTUEX was an opportunity to help get adjusted to working with our Navy counterparts and get accustomed to shipboard life. Old King Neptune was having a little bit of fun with some of our Devil Dogs' stomachs. We won't mention their names, however, 1st Lt. Wade and LCpl. Medina did need a little bit of medical assistance for the first couple of days. Once they got their sea-legs, they were fine.

We have also had a few birthdays within the section: PFC Sodoski turned 20 March 19, 1st Lt. Roach, who also was selected for Captain, celebrated his 26th birthday in Phoenix while at TRUE. Sgt. Manning turned a quarter of a century April 1 making him our "April Fools



## ***Yummy!***

Aggressor force actors from Alpha Battery 1/11 received scrumptious meals, ready to eat during the Humanitarian Assistance Operation portion of COMPTUEX recently.

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# MESSAGE

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Baby.”

Speaking of birthdays, Capt. Ellinger and his wife have a beautiful baby girl as an addition to their family named Madelyn Mar. 21. Madelyn weighed 7lbs., 14 oz. and was 21-¼ in. long. Mother and daughter are doing fine.

That brings us up to date. We're currently finalizing all the details for our next at-sea period, Fleet Exercise. With the hard work and effort of all the S-3 Marines – and the support of our families – we expect to continue to set the standard for the MEU.

## S-4 Logistics/Supply/Embark

We have seen some changes in personnel over the past few months. In March we said good-bye to the quiet yet dedicated Cpl. Reed whose EAS took him through an exciting four years in the Marine Corps. He completed two deployments with the MEU and is now on his final deployment to the First Civ Div. SSgt. Ibarra also left the MEU, transferring to I MEF HQ, but in return we added Sgt. Briggs and Cpl. Blanco, sincere motivators, whose sole job is to balance and spend the Marine Corps' money in support of the 13th MEU. Needless to say, they are invaluable.

Supply is working hard to get all the Training Allowance Pool gear and new flack jackets so we will be ready to fight come deployment time. They have already started issuing desert cammies and gear to Marines, and the realization of deployment is getting closer.

On the embarkation side, things are still changing. Ships' load plans and gear is still being worked out with the ultimate goal of making everything the Commander wants to take to war fit in the floating steel monsters. It is like trying to fit 13 beers into a 12-pack, but knowing the embark Marines, that won't be a problem.

Medical is still lining us all up on a monthly basis, sticking us with “who knows what” for “who knows why.” Most of us walk around with bruises and blood clots on our arms and buttocks from the injections, while Doc sadistically makes plans for the next round of immunizations.

Everyone in the S-4 is working toward deployment. After transitioning from one work-up to the next these two-week deployments have added up, and time is flying by. Before we know it, we'll be in the middle of the ocean or in some foreign country, standing by, ready to respond to any crisis. We will miss our friends and loved ones, which have stood by us every step of the way, and who also understand and believe in what we are doing. Keep the fire burning until we return.

## Medical Planner

From the Doc's bag:

With all the “creepy crud” that was passed around after COMPTUEX, you'd think I gave a bunch of shots ... but not one was given. Well, there is no need to worry about your loved ones being overlooked. A whole new series of shots are planned and I

have assured the colonel I will diligently carry out the duties assigned.

The Chief  
WWJD

## S-6 Communications

Seven Marines from S-6 have been promoted.

Newly promoted Sgt. Teddy Eristhee has worked very hard and is ready for the added responsibility.

Cpl's Larissa Kelley, Joshua Skelton and Nicole Solis have all distinguished themselves through hard work and attention to detail, and are looking forward to NCO challenges.

Promoted to the present grade of lance corporal were John Pinnix, Rico Enriquez and Joel Lashley. These young Marines have unlimited potential and are showing it every day.

The Comm Marines are currently enjoying a well-deserved break in the action between operations. The communicators are gearing up for the next operation in the 13th MEU work-up cycle. This operation called FLEETEX promises to be just as busy and challenging, but the Comm Marines are more than ready.

During COMPTUEX, Comm Marines faced the challenges of an antiquated system, but worked countless hours to ensure vital communications systems were operable. They have also used much of their break between exercises to ensure MEU Marines computer and communication needs are taken care of before the deployment.

The Joint Task Force Enabler Package has officially joined the 13th MEU S-6 section. They bring with them great capabilities and have already been utilized during COMPTUEX. The team did an outstanding job establishing phone and computer services needed by the Forward Command Element while deployed ashore.

The Communicators of the 13th MEU are all doing well and are meeting every challenge that is thrown their way.

## S-7 Headquarters Commandant

The S-7 has seen a lot of changes over the past few months. In December we had to say goodbye to a great Marine and an equally great man, Sgt. Skubic. More recently we picked up Cpl. Shelton, who checked in February and since being here has gotten meritoriously promoted to Cpl. He will be the CO's driver. Second to come was Sgt. Brooks who came to us in March. He came to the MEU from the East Coast to be the Police Sergeant. We still have two 13th MEU veterans, MSgt. Pede and Cpl. Delorenzo. MSgt. Pede recently got selected for Master Gunnery Sergeant, and will pin it on June 1 – OOH-RAH! Cpl. Delorenzo got promoted April 1 and will spend this deployment on ships platoon – BOOH-RAH!

Currently, the S-7 is working hard at maintaining the barracks (which looks great) and the upkeep of the command



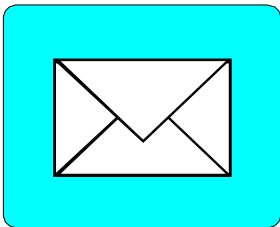
Sgt. Don L. Maes

SSgt. Myron Wrobel (right) and Cpl. Jennifer Sellers, show residents of the Arizona Boys Ranch a portable satellite communications set-up.



Sgt. M.C. Miller

Chief Catrucco grins as he innoculates the new PA Chief, SSgt. Gude.



# From the Homefront...

Greetings from your key volunteer network!

We are proud to announce that we have a great group of key volunteers that are in place to continue to assist our families

during the Fleetex, SOCEX and subsequent 6-month deployment. Our motivated crew and their volunteer section includes: Jennifer Ellinger (S-1), Megan Lima (S-2), Andrea Burcham (S-2), Christy Bensch (S-3), Becky Stout (S-4), Michelle Ford (S-4/S-6), Edy Quinlan (S-5), Charly Gallagher (S-6), Leslie Manning (S-6), Tami Miller (S-6), Anne Rosenthal (Radio Bn.), Judy Jefferson and Andrea Burcham.

If there has been an oversight and you have yet to be contacted by one of our key volunteers, please call the coordinator (Sylvia Landis) immediately at (760) 385-0558. (In case of an emergency, the Key volunteer cell phone number is (760) 212-3967).

The primary purpose of the key volunteer network is to provide a communication link between the families and the 13<sup>th</sup> MEU. Emergency family situations which warrant communication with the ship, information from the command which will keep families updated on 13<sup>th</sup> MEU activities at sea, and various

other important correspondence--are services your network will provide for you.

The KVN is also in place to assist families with finding solutions to problems that may occur while your Marine/Sailor is not in the area. Our volunteers are not qualified psychologists, pay specialists, etc., however, we will help you find professional service providers that can give you the assistance you need.

Last but not least, your key volunteer network is here to listen. We want to give you "a boost" when you're down. We also want to give you an

opportunity to be with other 13<sup>th</sup> MEU family members for camaraderie and new and lasting friendships.

Please utilize your key volunteer network--we are here to help.



**Sylvia Landis**  
13<sup>th</sup> MEU KVN  
Coordinator

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## MESSAGE

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post (which looks even better). When embarked on ship, they will maintain the berthing area and other maintenance problems that may arise.

### Staff Judge Advocate

Cpl. Hanson, our new legal clerk, was meritoriously promoted to her present rank March 2. Since joining the 13<sup>th</sup> MEU, Cpl. Hanson has drafted over 350 wills and powers of attorney. Prior to deploying, all Marines and Sailors should ensure that they have obtained a will and, if necessary, a power of attorney.

Any Marine, Sailor or family member who has questions regarding the need for a will or power of attorney may contact Cpl. Hanson or Maj. Carberry at 763-0747.

### Public Affairs

The 13<sup>th</sup> MEU Public Affairs Office is alive and well, tucked away in one of the smallest corners of the ship and headquarters building sending out the MEU's message to the American public by any and all means necessary.

While we were accomplishing our missions, two of us happened to get promoted along the way. 1st Lt. Landis, the Public Affairs Officer, was promoted to his present rank April 3, and Sgt. Miller, the Combat Correspondent, finally received his remedial and well-deserved promotion March 3.

After spending countless hours standing duty on ship, SSgt. Zimmerman finally caught "cabin fever," and was close to "going postal" on us. He survived, however, and continued to complete the myriad of oddball tasks thrown to him by the PAO.

The media training of the entire MEU is almost complete. Our goal is to provide realistic media scenario training with

media actors during the work-up exercises.

The old souvenirs have come and gone, and we hope to offer a new batch of 13<sup>th</sup> MEU T-shirts, sweatshirts, mugs, coins, patches, stickers, etc. to MEU members and family soon.

To keep in step with the progress of the 13<sup>th</sup> MEU and your favorite Marines, stay tuned with our website at <http://www.usmc.mil/13meu>. There you will find valuable family information and updates on our activities. Sylvia Landis has been planning some great events for the families of the 13<sup>th</sup> MEU and we commend her on her efforts.

Being away from family and friends has been difficult. We thank all the families for understanding our training requirements to prepare for our deployment.

### Chaplain

Well, it has started. The dreaded work-ups are here. All of the rumors are true. Work-ups are painful. The times that we are away from our families and friends are upon us. All of this means only one thing, that the six-month deployment is only a short time away.

In saying all of this, the 13<sup>th</sup> MEU is very involved in the work-ups process of preparing for our deployment. It is time-consuming and also means time away from the ones we love. Our Marines' and Sailors' morale has its ups and downs, but the family keeps us motivated.

The one word of advice I would like to share with the 13<sup>th</sup> MEU's family is to be an "encourager." The 13<sup>th</sup> MEU's tempo is very demanding, and at times very taxing. A word of encouragement at any time of the day or night is the best boost to anyone's morale. The simple words of "good job," or "hang in there," is sometimes all your Marine or Sailor needs to keep and staying motivated in a demanding job.

Help the family of the 13<sup>th</sup> MEU by being an encourager.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me any time. Have a great summer, God bless and Semper Fidelis.